

Written by Chieh Wu
09/25/05

My mother's sadness

My mother just came into the room to tell me how disappointed she is with me. I am currently a 25 years old PHD student while working full time. I just bought an apartment and I am about to move out of the house.

She said that if she had known about me today she would have killed me as a baby. These words brought back memories from ten years ago when we had the same argument. I still remember every second of that argument, every feeling, and every tear. I felt so angry, so hurt, that my own mother hated me this much. I screamed something incoherent back at her. I ran to the bathroom and cried. I wanted to let her know how much she has hurt me. I wanted to hurt her back.

I am a first generation Asian immigrant. At the time, the American dream for Asians is to start a Chinese restaurant. This might sound ridiculous to call working in a Chinese restaurant as a life dream, but it was and still is today. It is almost impossible for most Americans to even imagine the hardship that foreigners would face just to come to America. Everybody wants a fair chance in life which for most Americans is a birthright.

As for me, for this fair chance I spent the majority of my childhood working in a Chinese restaurant. I will always remember how much I hated it. When other kids play and go to vacations on the weekends. I worked. Every holiday when people celebrated at the restaurant, I ask customers if they would like something to drink. Every Christmas, working at the restaurant was the only way to spend the time with my family.

It was during Christmas the last time I heard my mother say these words to me. Our family has worked twelve hour shifts for the past week and everybody was irritated. I remember keep making mistake that day. I gave the customer the wrong food, and dropped water on customer's lap. Finally, I did something that really pissed off my dad. I don't even remember what I did, but my dad got so mad he tried to hit me. It took five people to pull him away. Then my mom rushed in the kitchen and started telling me how worthless I am. I am a bad son.

These were my replies:

"I don't want to smile at the customer any more when I am really miserable. It fucking Christmas mom, why do we have to work? How come everybody get s a Christmas except us?"

She slapped me and told me to deliver the food, the customer is waiting. I cried and cried at the doorstep to deliver the food. With tear in my eyes, I said, "here's your food." My tears that night probably ruined that family's Christmas. I walked back to my car, I hate Christmas.

I was young at the time, and it took me a long time to realize that my mother never meant what she said. Ten minutes ago, my mother walked into the room and repeated the same scene. Except it was not the same. Although my mother has not changed since. Although her words, her thoughts, her actions froze in time. I have changed.

It was not anger, nor pain I felt, but compassion. She was in pain and she claims that I am the source. She is in pain because I am not the son she wants me to be. She told me that I have not even met ten percent of her expectation. I told her that it took me twenty years to realize that it is impossible to meet her expectation. She is angry because I have stopped trying, I no longer need her approval.

I have worked so hard my whole life to have my parents be proud of me. Never once did my parents show up to my recitals, my concerts, or even plays I have written, directed, and acted. Never once did they show up to my basketball game. Sports after all to them does not put food on the table. My mother never understood why other parents that has seen my plays think that I'm great. She told me that they are just trying to be polite. My mother only really knows me as the clumsy waiter that gives the wrong food, and the bad son that talks back to her. She doesn't even know that I wrote and directed plays. An impossible expectation can scar a child forever. As for me, I have let it go. I no longer seek for approval.

She thinks that I am lazy because I lay on my bed all day and write a bunch of nonsense. I told her that I am understanding the meaning of life. I told her that there is nothing else more important than to answer this question. I told her that everything is relative and happiness is a choice. She told me that she is a normal person and a normal person has feelings. When things happen, people feel a certain way. I told her that these feelings are trained by the society and are illusions.

She thinks I am crazy. She screamed and cried to wonder how her son has turned out this way. Her tears pains me but I can no long feel the pain. She wondered that her as such a normal person, why can't her son just be normal. Calmly, I told her that I am only be who I am.

She cried and left the room.

I started writing this right after. I guess I just want to express how I feel right now. A part of me from a long time ago feels the sadness, anger, and pain. It is the part of me from the restaurant that wanted to scream back. I want to tell her to accept me for who I am and stop expecting me to be who she wants me to be. That part of me seems so far away.

Another part of me thinks. It is my choice to be the son she is looking for and continue to follow her expectation. In this decision I can make my mother less sad. Yet if I make this decision, I will be betraying myself. If I choose to be myself, I am therefore hurting my mother on purpose. I know that I can choose to make her happier, yet I choose not to. Does this make me selfish?

My decision so far has been the choice of being me. From this choice, my mother sees that I have not choose to please her and conclude that I do not care about her feelings. She starts imagining why I would make such a decision. In her mind, I am painted as a heartless, ungrateful son. For all that she has given me, I turn around to hurt her. Am I ungrateful?

I do not wish to see her suffer, but I consciously know that my choices will hurt her. Since it is my choice, do I or do I not want to see her suffer?

My actions defines who I am and who I am I define. As soon as I define who I am, my actions will follow. This is why people should be careful how they label themselves. As soon as a person believe that they are something, all their actions will act accordingly to how they perceive that something should act.

I define myself as pure love. I am the water in the river, the clouds in the sky, and the sun shine on your face. I am you and I am love itself.

I love my mother but I cannot be who she wants me to be. She wants her son to be one thing, *her son*, but I am all things. So the only thing left to do is for her so see me as who I really am. The only way for her to be happy is for her to realize that she has the ultimate control over her happiness. Anything and everything will happen, but it will always be up to her to interpret if it is good or bad. A glass is simultaneously half empty and full. Therefore, it is ultimately not my choice to make anyone happy. I can only be me and do the best I can to create happiness where ever I go.

I wish my mother is where I am now.